

AFGHANISTAN

TASHKENT ON TIES BETWEEN AFGHANS, SOVIETS

GF271541 Tashkent International Service in Uzbek 1700 GMT 22 Nov 83

[Unattributed commentary: "Soviet Fighters in Afghanistan"]

[Text] Dear listeners, HAQIQAT-E SARBAZ, which is printed in Kabul has recently reported on the aid extended by Soviet fighters (cenkciler) to Afghan peasants. The road near the (Oshna-ye Kadin) River was being repaired by a piece of machinery which had been burnt to ashes except for its metal structure. In accordance with the instructions they received from U.S. experts, the bands of robbers sent into Afghanistan from Pakistan had laid mines on the said road. The machine referred to was destroyed by one of them. Thus, a number of villages were supplied with foodstuffs, necessary (?equipment), and [words indistinct] through the road.

The head of the group for safeguarding the revolution in (?Babar) village, which was responsible for the work on the road, moved in to help. He appealed to Soviet fighters manning tanks. He knew that the basmachis had mined several sectors of the road. And, (?tank mechanic) Vitaliy Maksimchev was sent to help the peasants. He was well-trained in detecting and defusing enemy mines. Vitaliy Maksimchev has helped the Afghans on several occasions at the request of his commanders.

Vitaliy Maksimchev removed the first mine which was manufactured in Italy. It was placed in a cavity on the road. Later he removed the second and third mines. After some time the road was cleared of the mines. Nevertheless, one of the drivers of the loaded vehicles parked on the side of the road dared to drive through. Thus, a Soviet military vehicle driven by Vitaliy Maksimchev drove through first. It was followed by the rest of the Afghan vehicles. The people of the villages were impatiently waiting for them. The peasants expressed their gratitude to the Soviet fighters who responded quickly to their call.

This is one of the examples of the help the Soviet fighters have been giving to the friendly Afghan people. Soviet fighters are helping Afghan troops to protect roads and industrial factories against the plots of the (?bands of robbers). They are escorting convoys of vehicles carrying corn, rice and other foodstuffs and necessary equipment to the villages.

Soviet fighters are also helping peasants in repairing farm machinery, preparing land, harvesting, and heaping wood. They are building new hospitals, dwelling quarters, schools, and even mosques and giving them to the Afghans. In addition to this, they are repairing the hospitals, dwelling quarters, schools, and mosques which have been destroyed by the basmachis. All this work is done free of charge. Soviet military doctors are making medical aid available to the people without any charge at all. They are going to the villages and treating the sick. For example, Soviet military doctors have operated on Najibollah, a 9-year-old child, who was in serious condition on 6 March. They continued to treat him for over 6 months. Now he is in sound health.

In the light of the activities of destructive imperialist propaganda and its (?agents) in Pakistan and Iran aimed at creating lack of confidence between the Afghan people and the Soviet military servicemen, this has shown why efforts made in that regard have been a failure and will continue to be as such in the future. The people (?cannot be misled). The people are not satisfied with mere words. They wish to make up their minds on the basis of the work carried out. The Afghans are making up their minds on who their foes and friends are through their own experience. The confidence the Afghan people have in the Soviet fighters is the outcome of the latter's attitude toward justice and toward their relations with the local people. The Soviet fighters greatly respect the Afghan people's traditions, culture, and religion. The leaders and simple workers of that country have talked about this many times.

The troops of the limited number of Soviet units in Afghanistan have always been ready to help their Afghan friends in difficult times. For example, they have helped the people of Qandahar who suffered from floods. Soviet fighters also supplied technical equipment and construction material to the Afghans when floods in Emam Saheb damaged [word indistinct] on Amu Darya and actively participated in repairing the said water installations. Thus, the peasants succeeded in getting irrigation water for their crops. The Afghan press has highly praised the courage of the Soviet fighters who helped the people of Khayyam village [name as heard] which suffered from earth tremors. When a (?fault) developed in the (?fuel supply) complex in Kabul during the strong winter last year, Soviet fighters distributed wood to the people of the city free of charge.

What have been said above brings to mind the reason why the friendship between the Afghan people and the Soviet military servicemen, who have arrived in Afghanistan at the request of the DRA Government to help the Afghan people safeguard law and order and set up a new life with or without observers, is strengthening.

CSO: 1836/30

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KRASNAYA ZVEZDA REPORTS ON MINE CLEARING IN DRA

PM051830 Moscow KRASNAYA ZVEZDA in Russian 30 Nov 83 Second Edition p 2

[Article by own correspondent Lieutenant Colonel V. Skrizhalin under the rubric "The Romance of Military Service": "Five Days"]

[Text] Limited contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan--my assignment with the sappers was drawing to a close. I still had to chat to the soldiers who had just returned from a mission. Then it suddenly transpired that Private N. Ponomarev, handler of a mine-detecting dog, whom the commander had suggested as one of the heroes of my dispatch, came from the same village as me. We had the usual conversation about service and a sapper's dangerous work. When he learned that I was soon returning home on leave, Nikolay asked:

"You can give Father a detailed account of our service, but don't bother Mom: her health's not good."

I got back to my home village of Kalikino, which is in Lipetsk Oblast. Soon the worried and excited face of Mariya Ivanovna Ponomareva, Nikolay's mother, appeared in the doorway. It seems that as soon as she heard of my arrival, she dropped everything and immediately rushed over from the other end of the village. The first thing she did was to ask:

"How's my Kolya doing over there?"

When I finished my story Mariya Ivanovna, after a moment's silence, said:

"You can't imagine how glad I am that he's fine. I can't complain: he writes me every day. And these little snippets of news let me rest more easily. But just lately I've been worried again: I haven't had a letter from him for 5 days running. I don't know what to think..."

We often talk and write of the strength of a soldier's spirit. What are its sources? It is nourished by school and the Komsomol, and now the army. But the first and perhaps the main qualities were formed in the family and come from the parents. And primarily from the mother.

A mother's strength is manifested in everything. Even in her fear of seeming weak to the son lest his spirits suddenly fail. But the main strength of a soldier's mother is in her innate social maturity and her understanding, though she may not always be able to articulate it, of the public and state importance of the military duty carried out by her son.

Mariya Ivanovna Ponomareva did not make any high falutin remark when I talked to her about her son, who is carrying out his international duty in Afghanistan, thousands of kilometers from his native Lipetsk village of Kalikino. But her awareness of her son's duty to the motherland and the peoples and understanding of his international duty clearly came through in her words.

Nikolay Ponomarev is from the same regiment as the poet and hero Lieutenant Aleksandr Stobva. The officer died saving his comrades' lives. For this deed on fraternal Afghan soil he was posthumously awarded the Order of Lenin. The unit carefully cherishes the lieutenant's collected poems "A Song Is Stronger Than a Storm."

The commanders and political workers keep many letters from soldiers' mothers. By various routes letters reached me in Kabul from Antonina Borisovna Gerasimova from the city of Noginsk near Moscow and Naubakhar Mukhamedovna Bulyakova from the Uzbek settlement of Gakkabag. Their sons Aleksandr and Alfat--the first is a mortarman, the second a driver--have shown themselves to be true internationalist servicemen. Both have been awarded the Order of the Red Star.

Next spring Naubakhar Mukhamedovna will see her younger son enter the army. And her main wish is for him to serve honorably and vigilantly. And she made a request: Tell our dear soldiers, sergeants, warrant officers, and officers to serve in Afghanistan as our motherland requires. I know things are not easy for our sons. But they are Soviet soldiers, and we, their mothers, are with them. And we are proud of them.

It was said quite simply, but you could not put it better.

When I returned to Kabul from leave I decided to find out why Private Ponomarev had not written to his mother for so long.

Here is what Senior Lieutenant N. Ustyakin told me about those 5 days.

The road wound like a gray ribbon into the mountains. On the left was a wall of stone. Sheer and high: If you looked up your panama would fall off your head. On the right was the turbulent mountain river Konar.

Only a small section of road was in sight. The rest was hidden around the turn, and there was no knowing what awaited you there. Each step was full of surprises.

Platoon Commander Senior Lieutenant Akhat Muratov "picked out" the road on the map with his pencil, ringed the population centers through which the

convoy would have to pass, and marked the sections of the road where "anything can be expected."

The route was a familiar one, and the convoy support group knew its task. Everything was as usual. The only difference was the type of convoy that day. Except for the escorting combat vehicles, it was almost entirely made up of "(burabakhayki)." That is the name given here to the Afghan drivers' trucks with built-up sides and "captain's bridges" over the cabs, covered with metal patterns and chains, and painted various colors.

The freight that the "(burabakhayki)" were carrying was special. It was products for the population, building materials, and fertilizers. People were waiting for them in the villages. But without an escort capable of preventing a dushman attack on the convoy, and if one did happen, of rebuffing the dushmans, it was hard to expect the trip to be a success. And so the local authorities turned to the Soviet servicemen for help.

...The vehicle with the mine clearer was first to get under way. Heavy rollers pressed into the stony earth. If they came across a mine it would blow up, provided it was without "secrets."

But nevertheless the most reliable "sweeper" is man--the sapper. Just now Private Aleksandr Malikov, armed with a probe, along with his comrades removed two Italian mines from what was apparently a most "harmless" spot.

The detonation of these mines was evidently meant to be the signal for the dushmans to start firing on the convoy. Hiding in the rocks, they realized too late that their "surprises" had been discovered: The sappers had done this quickly and unnoticed. Consequently they opened fire on the convoy not in unison but individually, which made it possible for the motorized riflemen headed by Lieutenant Vladimir Byzhov to take effective counter-measures in good time.

...They made a short halt to let the convoy "close up" and give the drivers instructions again. A village lay ahead, and it was well known that this stretch of road was especially dangerous.

"We need your help now," Senior Lieutenant Muratov affectionately patted the ears of Pirat, the mine-detecting dog. All he said to its handler, Nikolay Ponomarev, was: "Forward!"

The sappers followed the handler, probing every inch of road, every stone, and every hollow.

Pirat circled one spot and sat down. His head facing the dangerous find. Ponomarev raised his hand: The group stopped.

On the jagged, cracked asphalt near the dog's pawmarks Nikolay examined a fresh patch of tar under a layer of dust. The sapper's practiced eye spotted that there were trails covered with tar and carefully camouflaged leading from the patch to the roadside. It meant there was more than one mine.

...Barely peeping out from the gutters, the drivers, having stopped at a safe distance, followed the Soviet sappers' work from afar. The dangerous find was soon rendered harmless.

Nikolay Ponomarev and Pirat set to work again with the utmost caution inspecting the adjoining stretch of road. Three more times the dog sat down on the road. Three more times the sappers extracted skillfully masked plastic mines.

...The village with its colorful bazaar right by the roadside was already in sight. There was half a kilometer to go to the first houses when shots rang out. The bullets hit the gasoline tanks. Two grain trucks caught fire. Privates Stepan Bogdanets and Bakhadyr Yunusov rushed with fire extinguishers to save the grain. The Belorussian and the Uzbek saved the grain that the Afghans were waiting for.

The fire died down; the freight had not been harmed. True, the trucks did have to be towed.

The dushmans usually mine ambush sites. Knowing bandit tactics Senior Lieutenant Muratov again sent the sappers on ahead. Private Amatbay Yuldashev's attention was drawn to a small stretch of road that had been neatly swept. A few accurate prods with the probe found a mine.

Junior Sergeant Varazdat Asaturyan decided to investigate the area around a crater and alongside a truck, overturned in an explosion, from the Afghan convoy that had preceded them without sappers. The dushmans usually place two or three mines alongside one another: As trucks pull out to pass the truck that has been blown up they run over the other mines. Intuition, or to be more accurate, professional instinct, did not mislead the sapper...

Finally they reached their destination. It can be said that the route was covered safely, without any injuries or losses. The sappers had piled up their trophies in one of the trucks--12 now harmless mines.

(Gatnazay), the senior Afghan driver, thanked Muratov by three times--the Afghan custom--touching cheeks with the Soviet officer.

Then came the return journey. Also with a convoy. But now with a different one. But just as difficult and dangerous. The sappers, among whom was Private Ponomarev, only returned to their positions after 5 days. It goes without saying that they received no letters on the road.

...I did not immediately get to the garrison where my fellow villager Ponomarev serves in a sapper subunit. It was only recently that I saw Private Ponomarev. I told him the latest news from the village. I asked how his mother was.

"She writes," replied Nikolay, and then added: "She is probably waiting for a letter from me every day."

CSO: 1801/134

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BAGHLAN PROVINCE UNDER SOVIET CONTROL

PM081306 Moscow SOTSIALISTICHESKAYA INDUSTRIYA in Russian 4 Dec 83 p 3

[Report by O. Shabalina: "Along the Road of Hope"]

[Text] Baghlan-Moscow--The 5th anniversary of the signing of the USSR-DRA Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighborliness, and Cooperation is 5 December.

Baghlan is the center of one of Afghanistan's northern provinces. From there a wide asphalt highway leads into the heartland of the country. There is typical Afghan scenery on both sides of the road--unending ridges of ash-gray mountains slashed by the folds of ravines. Against the backdrop of these masses of stone the occasional little villages clinging to the feet of the mountains, their adobe houses huddled together, seem especially small. The road winds north through these almost inaccessible regions--toward the Soviet border. Its importance for the national economy of "the land of mountains," which has no railroads, is hard to overestimate. A busy stream of freight moves along the highway in both directions. The Afghans call it "the road of hopes."

Now, at a troubled time for the republic, when gangs of dushman mercenaries sent in from abroad continue to operate on its territory, and movement along many of the country's roads is not safe, the Baghlan-Kabul route works without interruption. Big red and white intercity buses, heavy trucks gaily decorated with ribbons and little bells, a nippy Volkswagen probably stuffed with no less than eight people...On the roadside, paying no attention to the roaring traffic, a little donkey carrying a mountain dweller dressed in a snow-white turban marches along unperturbed, female figures swathed in chadors pass by, and noisy groups of kids run by. The bandits are wary of acting openly, preferring to operate by stealth and carry out clandestine sabotage. They try to intimidate the peaceful population by brutally attacking PDPA activists, Communist Youth League leaders, and the leaders of industrial enterprise. A delayed action mine was planted under the car of one of the leaders of the ("Guri") power region, and it was only thanks to vigilance of local (KHAD) (the Afghan security service) operatives that it was possible to prevent the crime. (Mirzo), a young security organ operative from the neighboring province of Qonduz, was brutally tortured by the bandits. But whatever sophisticated methods of clandestine warfare the mercenaries and their foreign patrons

resort to, they cannot hamper the formation of the new life on Afghan soil. The inhabitants of Pol-e Khomri recall the enthusiasm that accompanied the celebration of the 4th anniversary of the April Revolution. Columns of thousands of workers, peasants, soldiers of the People's Army, and students from the technical college--representatives of all sections of the population--filled the gaily decorated city streets. Millions of Afghans are ready to defend the gains of the April Revolution with weapon in hand.

Baghlan is one of the most industrially developed provinces in the country. Coal, processing, and light industry enterprises are concentrated here, and a cement plant, the ("Kar-Kar") coal mines, the ("Nasadhzi") textile factory, and a hydroelectric station built with the aid of Soviet specialists are in operation.

A major new project for the republic--a support-building combine--has been commissioned. (Mokhammed Gulchin), director general of the ("Guri") power region and a graduate of the Leningrad Polytechnical Institute, told me:

"Our combine will produce supports for the USSR-Kabul power transmission line that is now under construction. The power transmission line will open up new prospects for opening up the region's natural riches. Electricity will be brought to many towns and villages and the zone of irrigated land will be expanded. The construction of the combine has been a real school for training many dozens of skilled workers."

(M. Gulchin) spoke with special warmth of the Soviet engineers who helped to install equipment--M. Khachatryan, K. Pram-Balyk, and N. Klepach.

"For us Afghans," (M. Gulchin) says, "Lenin's remarks on the electrification of the entire country, and on peace as a necessary condition for fulfilling the tasks facing the country are a most specific program for building the new life and a happy future."

CSO: 1801/133

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CORRESPONDENT DESCRIBES WORK OF UNIT IN DRA

PM201739 Moscow KRASNAYA ZVEZDA in Russian 17 Dec 83 Second Edition p 3

[Special correspondent Colonel V. Filatov dispatch: "That Front-Line Feeling"]

[Text] Limited Contingent of Soviet Troops in Afghanistan--Unit X, part of the limited contingent of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, earned the mark "four" during the last training year. Four times it was awarded a challenge red banner...

Marks are statistics. Sometimes statistics need explanation and deciphering. So what about the four marks earned by unit X?

Well, for instance, in comparison with 1980 the number of those rewarded for their successes in combat and political training in the unit has tripled. By categories it reads: ensigns--up to 10 times, sergeants--up 4 times, and soldiers--up 6 times... And the number of violations of military discipline in comparison with last year has halved. Party organizations have been set up in all subunits.

The military unit is deployed in a valley through which a stream flows, and this is somewhat reminiscent of our Urals area. From the stream terraces of vineyards scramble up to the heights, and this spot is reminiscent both of our Transcaucasus and of Moldavia. Not far off rear the sharp peaks of sheer mountains that are the spit and image of our Kirghizia or Turkmenia. If you take a really good look and if you really want to, you can find here at odd moments something of our non-Chernozem Zone, Transcarpathia, and Crimean hills.

It is most important, for instance, for a Urals man to find something of the Urals, a Transcaucasian something of his native area, and for people to recognize here the Carpathians, and Tyumen, and the Baltic... Where the motherland starts--this is an eternal question. The main thing is to find the right answer. It is to this that party political work in the unit is largely directed.

International aid is sometimes linked with the concept of the front line [peredniy kray]. The front line of struggle. There is a front line and

there is a front-line feeling. It is very well developed, for instance, in border guards--it is when your whole fatherland lies behind you. But there are situations when the border guards are far from the front line, and the front line itself, according, of course, to the significance of the situation, is manned by motorized riflemen and tank troops, pilots, sappers, and drivers--then the front-line feeling must possess them in the same way that it possesses the border guards who have the whole fatherland behind them.

Leonid Sterinovich, deputy political affairs commander of an engineers and sapper company, has already been part of our limited military contingent in Afghanistan for 6 months. He is a blue-eyed, blond, and energetic Belorussian. He is virtually the same age as his men, but even in fatigues it would be obvious that he is the senior, wise, authoritative, and respected person here. He says:

"In the fall experienced servicemen went back to the reserve from our company. Men worth their weight in gold! What a schooling they had had! When the counterrevolution started to wage mine warfare as well, we sappers had, as they say, quite a bit of work to do. What should be noted here? Well, for instance, American mines need one approach, Italian mines quite a different one, and Pakistani mines cannot be treated like either the American or Italian ones. And there are also Egyptian mines, West German, Chinese, British... Mines, OK, we can and do dismantle them, but there are still the instructors, different instructors: the Americans teach the dushmans in their way, the Pakistanis in their way, and the Egyptians in their way... In short, our soldiers here must know thoroughly the tactics, style, cunning, and trickery of the various armies of the world... Grand lads! What a schooling they have had!"

In this kind of situation the front-line feeling is fostered, and life, service, combat and political training, and competition go on. Just as in the units of all our military districts. With the single distinction that a lot is learned here not in what is called a situation as near as possible to a combat situation but in the most real situation there is: be it the guard at his post, the driver behind the wheel, or, for instance, that same political worker Senior Lieutenant L. Sterinovich.

Sterinovich has been here 6 months and for 6 months he has been keeping a diary of his work. Day after day. A scrupulous description of each mine-clearing operation. There is method in whatever he writes. "Why do you do it?" I asked. "It is not so much for me as for the man who will replace me," he replied. "When my replacement comes I will give him my job and this diary so that he doesn't start everything from scratch, from zero..."

This is the slogan of the company where Senior Lt L. Sterinovich is deputy commander: "On each mine-clearing operation act like the heroes of our regiment acted in the Great Patriotic War." Within the unit the "combat experience school" and the "courage school" are at work. In these schools servicemen of leading specialties exchange experience.

To amass experience, generalize it, understand it, and pass it on to the young is the main concern today of all commanders and political workers. Continuity is not a link between the experience of a first, second, and third person. Continuity is the condensed experience of a first, second, and third person passed on to the fourth, who uses it and adds his experience to it before passing it on to a fifth. They say in the East: "He who goes ahead paves the way for him who follows."

During combat training prime attention is devoted here to the individual training of the soldier, sergeant, ensign, and officer. Conditions dictate that it be put to the sternest test in each individual. From the very beginning the youngsters are taught to quickly and reliably dig trenches and shelters in the rocky soil, to organize fire systems and install engineering constructions, and to fire from a height and on the move. Special stress is laid on the ability to conduct combat operations by night. In the unit today there are experienced methodologists in teaching the silent operation of subunits in the mountains, sharp-wittedness, and military strategems... All this work had an immediate effect on results: the number of excellent marks this year has almost quadrupled compared with last year.

Whenever there is talk about evaluations and marks, mention should also be made of the work of commanders and political workers. An Afghan Army military unit is deployed in the vicinity. Only 2 years ago it was not considered a leading unit. Our servicemen set about helping the Afghan warriors. They started learning together and acquiring practical skills on the firing range together. And they did not stop there. The Soviet servicemen started teaching the Afghans Russian, and the Afghans taught the Russians the Dari and Pashto languages. In a short time great successes were achieved; at any rate today there are no language problems between these two units. We fitted out a Soviet-Afghan friendship room, and the Afghans did an Afghan-Soviet room. How was all this reflected in the training of the Afghan military unit's personnel? During firing range tests this year the unit received a solid four-out-of-five mark.

And what does a mark of four mean? Primarily--great effectiveness in the battle against the counterrevolution.

The Afghans say: "Friendship among peoples equals wealth." The firmer the friendship between Soviet and Afghan servicemen becomes, the more frantically the April Revolution's enemies rage. Wherever bullets and mines are powerless, deceit, forgery, and slander come into play. The main aim is to disunite, separate, sow discord and mistrust, and breed doubt in people's souls. How is it done? In the foulest and vilest way. Here is an example. In the northeast province of Badakhshan a dushman group donned Soviet uniforms, burst into a settlement, carried out a massacre, and rounded it off by blowing up the mosque. However, the provocation failed. Scarcely had the dushmans cleared out of the settlement than a rally was held at which the inhabitants condemned those who carried out the provocation. The time when it was possible to dupe and deceive the peasants is passing. An increasing number of Afghans are coming to realize who is the enemy and who is their motherland's friend.

In another settlement--(Shigal)--dushman cutthroats gathered all the inhabitants together and read them allegedly procured Soviet instructions of how Afghan husbands are to be separated from their wives and children. Unfortunately, albeit in isolated instances but nevertheless, these black methods sometimes work, as in (Shigal) where certain crazed fanatics nearly decided to kill their wives and children simply to keep them out of Russian hands. Not only are these types of preachers and "witnesses" of how the Russians allegedly blow up mosques used, but also numerous leaflets delivered by secret paths from Peshawar, and various types of radio broadcasts. Of course, all this needs to be exposed without delay.

A special detachment has been set up in the unit called the propaganda and agitation detachment. Its commander, Major A. Fedorovskiy, says:

"By agreement with the local authorities and with their direct participation we regularly carry out missions to settlements and nomad camps. The missions are both long--up to 20 days--and short--leaving in the morning and returning in the evening. The detachment comprises around 20 men. The detachment is equipped with a mobile autoclub truck, a broadcasting [zvukoveshchatelnaya] station, we have a video recorder, a duplicator, and amplifying apparatus. The latter we need mainly for...the women. So, what happens when our detachment arrives in some far-flung settlement. In a flash all the men and children gather round--but not a single woman. Their religious laws forbid them to appear in public, especially with strangers present. Where are they at that moment? In huts and behind walls. So we switch on our amplifiers so that everyone can hear us. There are three (?translators) in the detachment. During the trip we are assigned not less than two doctors, one of whom is without fail a woman. Why a woman? Because, when we arrive in a settlement, apart from anything else we open a medical center. With the men and the children, as I have already said, there are no problems, but it is a little more complicated with the women--this is where our woman doctors come in, they find out which house holds a sick woman and go there to help...

Our servicemen counter the black propaganda of the counterrevolution with the truth about the land of the Soviets and Soviet soldiers. Apart from this detachment, there are other groups dealing with the same thing as the detachment. There have been around 300 hours of broadcasting [zvukoveshchaniya] and around 70 rallies in the past 6 months alone.

"What sort of reception do you get?" Maj Fedorovskiy cuts in. "It differs. After all, you may get on the wrong end of a dushman bullet or a mine. But the good-byes are always the same: when they see us off they ply us with tea. But the best reward for us is when they say: 'Come again'..."

Fedorovskiy himself is a political worker born in Kurgan Oblast. His father is a driver and his mother a pensioner. There are nine children in the family. Two of Fedorovskiy's brothers are serving in the army: one is a lieutenant colonel, the other a corporal. His remaining brothers and sisters work at the sovkhos and at the mine, in short Fedorovskiy is from the salt of the earth--the village. He himself has two daughters and his wife works at a plant...

The Afghans see him as a man who has been through a great school of life, and therefore every word from his is truth itself.

Someone may ask: Well, why should we prove the obvious? Good question. However, we must prove it. Because the enemy is sophisticated and cunning. Because not everyone in Afghanistan is as yet capable of interpreting what is happening. And what kind of enemy is it? The kind for which there is nothing sacred. Neither God, nor Allah, nor the Bible, nor the Koran.

And in this situation the stream of applications requesting admission to the party from unit X has increased considerably. Some 38 percent of those accepted are from combat subunits, more than half of them are privates and sergeants, and some of them have been awarded orders and medals for the excellent way they have carried out their international duty in Afghanistan.

Here is the application of Private Aleksandr Kondrashov, machinegunner from the 3d motorized rifle platoon: "I request to be accepted as a candidate member of the CPSU... I will worthily uphold the honor of an internationalist serviceman..." He is being recommended by Senior Lieutenant A. Lukyanov, deputy commander of the motorized rifle platoon for political affairs. In his recommendation he writes, in particular, about Kondrashov: "He has shown courage and heroism in carrying out his international duty to give help to the Afghan people. He has a string of commendations from command. He was nominated for the 'For Combat Service' medal." Private Kondrashov's second recommendation was given by Senior Lieutenant A. Sheremetyev, platoon commander.

And here is what Sergeant Habib Abdualimov wrote in his application: "I request to be accepted as a candidate member of the CPSU since, having devoted my life to the service of the motherland in the ranks of the Soviet Army, I cannot conceive of it without the party..." He is being recommended by Corporal V. Samusenko and Major J. Obyskalov. The officer, in particular, wrote in H. Abdualimov's recommendation: "He has repeatedly participated in giving help to the Afghan people in defense of the gains of the April Revolution. For the steadfastness and courage he has shown and for his loyalty to the military oath he has been awarded the 'For Combat Service' medal. He has a good knowledge of the DRA people's language, which gives him the opportunity to carry out agitation and propaganda work among the local populace."

Here is the application of Senior Lieutenant Isakadi Amirov, commander of a motor transport company: "I request to be accepted as a CPSU member since I wish within the ranks of Lenin's party to fulfill its historic decisions and defend our socialist motherland..." He is being recommended by Senior Lieutenant N. Yeroshin, secretary of the party organization, and Ensign A. Novichkov, company sergeant major. One of the recommendations says about Amirov: "In a complicated situation he shows himself to be a decisive, courageous, and skilled commander. He has taken part in more than 80 missions and has personally headed convoys to remote settlements. For the courage and heroism he has shown in giving international help to the Afghan people, he has been awarded the order 'For Service to the Motherland in the USSR Armed Forces' 3d class."

I saw many such character assessments, recommendations, and applications. Great people. What a schooling they have had. The front-line schooling.

Unit X of the limited military contingent in Afghanistan obtained a solid four on the results of the past training year. Four marks. A year's service. A statistic made up of courage and valor, duty and life, and the struggle for communist ideals. An obelisk in honor of the unbreakable friendship between Afghan and Soviet servicemen was recently unveiled in the district center nearest the spot where the unit is deployed.

It is for those four marks for the 1983 training year.

CSO: 1801/132

AFGHANISTAN

SOVIET HELICOPTERS AIRLIFT GRAIN TO AFGHAN VILLAGES

PM091356 [Editorial Report] Moscow KRASNAYA ZVEZDA in Russian 8 December 1983 Second Edition front-pages a "Photo Reportage" by correspondent Lieutenant Colonel Y. Skrizhalin entitled "Flights of Courage" under the rubric "On the Land of Afghanistan." The article is accompanied by two photographs by V. Sukhodolskiy, one of which shows two helicopters in flight above clouds and appears to have been taken through the window of a third helicopter, while the other shows Major A. Skobov, Senior Lieutenant Technical Service V. Podkolzin, and Major V. Gunchenko inside a helicopter cabin. The article reads as follows:

"Badakhshan Province. The extreme northeast of Afghanistan. The most mountainous part of the country. Impregnable ridges, ravines, glaciers, eternal snows. There are hardly any valleys here where grain would thrive.

"From time immemorial livestock raisers set out for the agricultural provinces of Takhar and Qonduz on the eve of winter to stock up with wheat and corn for the year. That journey took several months. Moreover, the buyers of food frequently fell prey to robbers. And now the number of robbers on the roads has been swollen by dushmans who call themselves 'defenders of Islam.'

"This fall many inhabitants of the Badakhshan districts of (Darvaz), (Khogon), and (Zeybak)--from the most remote mountain regions--gathered in Qonduz. Having bought grain, they could not bring themselves to set out on the return journey: they feared bandits from among the 'fighters for faith.'

"It is not hard to understand the peaceful livestock raisers: the dushmans might attack them, unarmed as they were, at any moment on their way home. So, they would return home after a long, difficult journey empty-handed--without livestock, without money, and without grain. And they might not return at all: Human life is cheap as far as the 'defenders of Islam' are concerned. In addition, having taken travelers prisoner, they sometimes drive them to their lairs and under fear of death make them join the gang and struggle against the people's power.

"It was then that Afghan comrades turned to the command of the Soviet limited military contingent for assistance. The crews of 'air trucks'--powerful MI-6 helicopters--received the task of making 'grain' flights. The thing is that there are practically no roads in the mountains, and helicopter pilots could deliver freight directly to settlements and tens of times more quickly than road transport.

"But the dushmans do not care what sort of aircraft or helicopter is in the air or what sort of freight is on board. They immediately open fire at every opportunity. It was decided to fly along ravines in the mountainous region--which is known to be a difficult thing.

"The Afghan livestock raisers were in a hurry to load sacks of grain into the helicopters' freight compartments. They badly missed their families, who were living half-starving without the breadwinners. Taking into consideration the importance and complexity of the mission, the best crews were sent to transport the grain and the Badakhshan men.

"The helicopters of Major Anatoliy Skobov and his wingman, Major Viktor Voronin, were loaded 'to the brim,' as the saying goes. The greater part of the route was unknown, for it had not been flown before. They decided to make the first flight via Feyzabad. It was a longer way, but it seemed more convenient and somewhat safer: the terrain is relatively familiar as far as Feyzabad. They flew on to their destination normally, as the helicopter pilots later sparingly put it.

"When they returned to Qonduz for the next batch of freight and people, Captain Aleksandr Kotov, the leading crew's navigator, worked out a different route--a direct one. It was far shorter but passed over unfamiliar mountain massifs, where dushmans were hiding.

"On the other hand, it will use less fuel, and so we will take additional freight on board,' the navigator explained his proposal. Major A. Skobov agreed with him. He knew it was possible to fly even to the end of the world with Kotov, not just to unknown Badakhshan.

"And once again, with rotor blades cleaving the air with a ringing whistle, the MI-6's take off, gain height in an ascending spiral, and head east, where the almost inaccessible mountains and tangled ravines will test their skill, courage, and strength of spirit and where people impatiently await them."

CSO: 1801/135

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